

**Metropolitan Homelessness Executive Commission Meeting**  
Thursday, May 6, 2016  
at the Sonny West Conference Center, Howard Office Building  
700 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South, Nashville, TN

The meeting began at 9:01 a.m.

**Present:** Wendell Segroves, Liz Allen Fey, Kirby Davis, Steven Samra, Renee Pratt

**Staff:** Will Connelly, Judy Tackett, Karri Simpson, Lesley Head, Deon Trotter

**Minutes:**

The minutes of the March 4, 2016 Metropolitan Homelessness Commission Executive committee meeting were approved.

**Preparation for full Commission Meeting:**

The committee prepared for the full commission meeting including topics of the encampment task force, Commission bylaws, and the Focus Strategies report.

The meeting adjourned at 9:21 a.m.

**Metropolitan Homelessness Full Commission Meeting**  
Friday, May 6, 2016  
at the Sonny West Conference Center, Howard Office Building  
700 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South

**Present:** Liz Allen Fey, Kirby Davis, Wendell Segroves, Steven Samra, Renee Pratt, Nick Atwood, Charles Strobel, Mina Johnson, Erik Cole, Marvin Cox, Josh Lee, Phil Duke, Jim Harbison, Ellen Zinkiewicz, Freddy O'Connell, Tom Turner

**Staff:** William Connelly, Judy Tackett, Karri Simpson, Lesley Head, Deon Trotter

The meeting began at 9:30 a.m.

Howard Allen, in the public, stated he will not wait until the end of the meeting to speak. He wants to know where were Commissioners at Ft. Negley. The problem is that they need housing and they don't have it. Commissioners are supposed to be a liaison for the homeless community and they aren't out there. The system needs to be fixed and you have the right people sitting here care.

**Minutes:**

The minutes from the January 7, 2016 and March 4, 2016 meetings were approved.

**Encampment Task Force Recommendations Presentation**

The purpose of the meeting was to address the current state of authorized and unauthorized encampments in Nashville. At the previous Metro Homelessness Commission meeting, held on March 4, 2016, the task force presented on their recommendations regarding unauthorized encampments.

Regarding authorized encampments the task force recommends that the Metro Homelessness Commission support and offer reasonable assistance to private efforts to create authorized transitional encampments in Nashville on property approved by the owner. A model of this support partnership is the encampment at Green Street, which has been operating for the past 15 years.

**Encampment Discussion and Next Steps**

Freddy O'Connell wants to know how the timeline for Ft. Negley was established, what does reasonable assistance mean, and how many private efforts to currently establish authorized encampments currently exist?

Liz Allen Fey stated that the question regarding the Ft. Negley timeline will not be addressed since that is a separate issue, not overseen by the Homelessness Commission, that happened to occur at the same time.

Will Connelly went on to address the remaining questions. Reasonable assistance is about providing intensive outreach for people living in encampments that is non-judgmental, is housing focused, and consistent, while creating a clear pathway to housing and supports. For Metro Homelessness Commission staff this means creating a system that is built around people and their needs and not organizations and their wants. The Commission has applied for more funding for outreach to work in campsites, as well as initiatives to make the system less confusing and traumatizing.

Charlie Strobel said there isn't an accurate capacity and invited outreach workers to comment.

Denis Huey, with the public, stated that there is nowhere to put the individuals living in current encampments to authorized encampments. There are no private efforts.

Steven Samra states that creating encampments on private land is a massive lift that he doesn't think Nashville is capable of and he does not accept that recommendation. There is a crisis in this community, with people waiting over a decade [for housing], people are frustrated, and while there are challenges around creating authorized encampment if there isn't a specific recommendation what will remain is still a hodge-podge of camps around the community and issues with private landlords. This will lead to further displacement of people experiencing homelessness. He is extraordinarily passionate about this discussion but does not have the time to commit to this. The Commission needs to reconsider this recommendation.

Wendell Segroves asked Steven Samra to clarify what is should be recommended to. Steven thinks it should be a recommendation to create sanctioned encampments. He does a lot of work with sanctioned encampments around the country and a central location is needed for people to depend upon. The Commission needs to support these efforts in any way they can.

Freddy O'Connell asked if they considered an interim period to establish authorized encampments while the resources for more outreach and path to permanent housing are developed.

Liz Allen Fey thinks that this is a discovery process and that the Commission can choose to accept or reject any pieces of these recommendations and the next step is take what they decide to the Mayor. The first step is to decide what the Commission wants to do with the recommendations of this task force.

Charlie Strobel stated that an image is that there is a river and people are drowning and some people are drowning quicker and there are a limited number of lifeguards, who do we choose to save first? That is the question Nashville is wrestling with.

Liz Allen Fey says that is the wrong question. The question should be about developing the system, while meeting needs so that they don't have to choose who to save.

Erik Cole thinks there is an urgent need to look at the first recommendation because there wasn't a quorum to look at this last meeting and it shouldn't be looked past.

Liz Allen Fey is split the recommendations in two. The first recommendation is the community needs to have clear policies around how the community deals with unauthorized encampments.

The motion to accept the first recommendation was made and seconded. Discussion ensued around this recommendation regarding what eviction means within the recommendation, how the recommendations help move people into permanent housing, and connecting the system. A concern is that the policies don't express Metro authorize encampments and doesn't change a policy.

Will Connelly stated that there are resources in the community that aren't being used well because of the barriers that have been put in place not allowing access. This has to be addressed so that they can actually get an accurate idea of how much housing is needed- right now there are empty shelter beds and programs that are housing people who aren't experiencing homelessness. He doesn't want to close encampments and thinks you have to start with making services to housing accessible. He worries that all this time, leadership, and resources are used to establish an authorized encampment that will likely have barriers to it, screening out the people who need it; Green Street has barriers including sobriety when the focus could be on making current housing services accessible.

Nick Atwood thinks that creating policies for something that is unauthorized is confusing to him. When comments are made that there are empty beds that can't be accessed, that should be the focus. He would prefer moving in that direction before creating policies that can add more confusion to a problem. A lot of

the laws that are passed have good intentions but sometimes you can write too much legislation that has an effect that is counterproductive and counter intuitive. He feels that this should be tabled because more discussion is needed, while working on addressing the access to services.

The Commissioners voted on the first recommendation; there are nine voting members:

- 7 voted to move the recommendation forward
- 1 opposed
- 1 abstained

There was a motion and second to accept the second recommendation.

Steve Samra stated that this does not rule out the potential for a sanctioned camp or additional option that has not been thought of yet, which is most critical. This is the first recommendation ever around encampment and he would support any private land owner who wanted to establish a well-run encampment.

Freddy O'Connell doesn't think that this closes doors but begins a conversation that has never occurred. There are things being expressed with active intent to pursue for the first time. He thinks the recommendation opens the door for private efforts to participate in the establishment of encampments.

Kirby wants to know what staff is expected to do in regards to the offer of reasonable assistance.

Will Connelly stated it is more around how Metro Government supports Green Street with working through codes issues, providing health a safety standards, etc. and not what staff of the Commission will be expected to do. However, he feels where staff could likely assist in regards to authorized encampments is around outreach and pathways to housing, but that wasn't really discussed as part of this recommendation.

Liz Allen Fey thinks this brings really critical point that we have to stop operating out of one department; this is whole city response.

The Commissioners voted on the first recommendation; there are nine voting members:

- The vote was unanimous in favor of.

### **Financial Report and Budget:**

Lisa Rickets reported that the only concern is that the MDHA CDBG budget needs to go back through Metro Council.

### **Nashville Housing Crisis Resolution System**

The Focus Strategies assessment of the system has been released. Will Connelly gave an overview of the assessment.

Principles of Housing Crisis Resolution System (HCRS) are:

- Housing focused
- Person centered
- Data informed
- Effective use of resources

These principles lead to ending homelessness, making it a rare, brief, and one-time occurrence.

This includes:

- Focusing on access to housing and building the system around the needs of people versus the needs of agencies;
- Making decisions around data and using solutions that have been proven effective;
- Using the resources Nashville has effectively making an impact for people experiencing homelessness.

Results of the Focus Strategies Report included:

- Data isn't being collected consistently;
- Current bed utilization is about 75% and only about 30% of people experiencing literal homelessness are being served through programs within Nashville;
- Transitional housing is 4 to 7 times more expensive than permanent housing solutions.

The primary recommendation of the Focus Strategies report is:

- Identify a single entity tasked with transforming current system to HCRS

Others recommendations included

- Investing in coordinated entry;
- Removing barriers to homeless services programs;
- Divert from shelters;
- Put more funding into rapid re-housing;
- More funding for landlord recruitment and housing navigation;
- Investing more in HMIS and improve participation rates.

Discussion:

Jim Harbison says that no matter what is done funders need to be included in this conversation and the CoC needs to decide the direction of the CoC.

Liz Allen Fey entertained if the Commission can accept and adopt the four principles as a commission body.

It was moved to accept the four principles and seconded. All approved.

Freddy O'Connell stated that most of the recommendations would be helpful to all, but he wants to hear from experts in this field regarding what recommendations should be accepted or rejected, and what are the challenges for implementation.

The Commission agreed that this will be the discussion for July.

### **Announcements**

Will Connelly stated that within the first three months of 2016, 203 people were housed. Since January of last year, 1186 people have been housed through the efforts of all the How's Nashville partners.

### **Public Hearing**

Charles: The system is using jails as a homeless shelter and mental health hospital. That is not what they are for and tax dollars should not be used for that. If Nashville is going to crack down on people selling the papers on the side of the road, then they should for agencies collecting money on the side of the road as well; there should not be a double standard.

Howard Allen: He thanked Jim Harbison for being the new director of MDHA because he feels he gets it. The Rock 'n' Roll Nashville Marathon just happened and is a fundraiser and something like that needs to be done to go toward buying housing. Homelessness should not be criminalized. He had a friend who

came to the last meeting and he asked him not to speak but then he got clarity. They freed the slaves and sitting in these meetings is keeping people in slavery. What was said today did nothing. This group needs to listen to the people, other cities are ending homelessness. MDHA and Barnes Trust needs to be kept separate. There is no housing for people experiencing homelessness and it is pathetic. You have to put the people over profit. It's time for land for houses. Talk is cheap.

Barry Hobbs: Would like for Room in the Inn and Open Table to get together to have the churches to serve the homeless year round. The focus other than that should be on housing, jobs, transportation, identification, and health care. Would like to see the business sector, religious, and Metro get together to come up with 35 million to be spent through 2019 to end the problem of homelessness and poverty. If it can be ended by 2020 and the 35 million isn't enough than have another 65 million on standby to assist through 2020. People are getting sick and tired of being sick and tired. Sometimes it takes being rough and tough to get the job done. It takes different ways to get to the solution, as long as it doesn't involve violence. Talk is cheap and actions speak louder than words. The presentation was cool but he can't stay awake during these meetings- but not because it was boring but he just can't stay awake. Let's solve the problem for these people. Progress has been made but not enough. Each person should get 5 minutes to speak and this group should meet 12 times a year if real progress is going to be made.

Samuel Lester: A memorial service was held for Billy Poore yesterday. Billy lived at Ft. Negley for quite some time. When he left he sought treatment for substance use and depression. He found refuge at Ft. Negley where friends and community could support him. Once he had to leave Ft. Negley he went to the hospital 3 times, was assaulted twice, and struck by his car that ultimately took his life. He had a voucher but had been criminalized through homelessness so many times that he struggled to find housing. Are we making things better or worse for people? That is the question we should be asking ourselves. It is phenomenal that 1000 people got into housing but yet somehow the city doesn't seem to realize how that is saving the city. If you look at the cost of housing someone or keeping them on the streets, 21 million was saved by the actions of this community- yet there isn't money coming forward for the Homelessness Commission and How's Nashville and the amount of money being given to the Barnes Trust fund doesn't come close to meeting the housing need. The police department continues to criminalize homelessness. We have to find a way to stop being counterproductive.

Byron Andrew- He thinks this city is the great city. He has been doing real estate and development in south Florida and this has become a big problem in growing cities. There is a site that he has done some preliminary soil test on and would be an easy development project. Private public partnership is simple- no money is needed from the city, just need the site donated. With the density numbers that have been done, the site could house 1500 people. He would help orchestrate that if the Commission is behind this. He has fought a city before but doesn't want to do that again.

Seth: He sees a lot of people in this room with many different backgrounds. Wants to issue challenge for everyone on the Commission to experience homelessness; go meet these people. This homeless community has a lot of veterans and they are some of the best problem solvers.

Steven Samra responded that he gets the challenge but when you are done, you get to go home. You can no replicate homelessness.

Denis Huey: He appreciates all the members of the encampment task force and thinks there was a lot of effort. He read the 2<sup>nd</sup> recommendation again and asked Commissioners what they think is missing that could really help solve the problem? Metro Government is not mentioned, they are totally absolved. This is weak. Metro is going to have to solve this problem whether they want to or not. We're sticking this problem right back on private property owners and Metro Government doesn't have to do anything. That is really disappointing. This could move along quicker if it stated that Metro had to do something.

Steve Lindstrom: He was stunned to hear what the recommendation was because the task force had been talking about sanctioned encampments and what metro police has to do in regards to encampments, which is all completely left out of the recommendation. The recommendation was a complete 180 of all the discussion that occurred in the task force meetings. This leaves the city completely off the hook and has no guidance to Metro Police at all.

Liz Allen Fey asked what the Commissioners heard and is there anything they want to respond to. Commissioners heard:

- Frustration
- Disappointment
- Comments about how jails function

Responding to Denis Huey, Steven Samra stated that the recommendation does leave a gaping hole. The city outreach workers have fought tooth and nail for years and he has watched the progress of the incredible housing placements numbers under Will's guidance. He is frustrated and wants housing, encampments, and safe places for people to go. He also recognizes that this is a battle that is bigger than the Commission and this recommendation starts that conversation. This isn't the end of the discussion around encampments and the de facto jail system. This is a process and it is frustrating because it takes time.

Freddy O'Connell stated it is impossible not hear frustration and they should hear it until everyone is housed. This is his first meeting and it is encouraging to know that there are opportunities for real progress through this group. He was also encouraged that the Mayor discussed permanent supportive housing at the State of Metro address and that should encourage them all. The frustration needs to be turned into action.

Mina Johnson thinks it is unacceptable that people are living on the streets and as a government body they have a responsibility to seek a solution.

Howard Allen stated that a man named Robert Mitchell was sitting on a park bench and was shot in the back of the head and there is a court date coming up.

The next full Commission meeting is Friday, July 8 2016 at 9:30 a.m. at the Sonny West Conference room in the Howard Office Building.

The next Executive Committee meeting is on Tuesday, June 14, 2016 at 8:30 a.m. at Metro Social Services, 800 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North.

With no other comments the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.